

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

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R 091503Z JUN 75

FM AMCONSUL MUNICH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5846

AMEMBASSY BONN

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, GW, XH

SUBJECT: LABOR DIFFICULTIES AT RADIO FREE EUROPE

REF: MUNICH A-45, JUNE 2, 1975

1. SUMMARY. RFE EMPLOYEES HAVE VOTED AUTHORIZATION TO THEIR UNIONS "TO TAKE ANY ACTION THEY DEEM NECESSARY, INCLUDING CALLING OF STRIKE" SHOULD NEGOTIATIONS WITH MANAGEMENT NOT PRODUCE AGREEMENT ON FOUR ISSUES. THREE OF ISSUES ARE NEGOTIABLE, ACCORDING TO RFE MANAGEMENT, BUT PRESENT INSTRUCTIONS FROM NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS PRECLUDE NEGOTIATION ON FOURTH, WITHDRAWAL OF ANNOUNCED PERSONNEL CUTS ABOVE THOSE UNDERTAKEN AS PART OF RFE/RL CONSOLIDATION. UNION/MANAGEMENT NEGOTIATIONS ARE SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 12. UNION ACTION APPEARS AIMED PRIMARILY AT PRESSURING BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING INTO INCREASING ITS PLANNED 57 MILLION DOLLAR BUDGET REQUEST FOR FY 77. ACTUAL STRIKE SEEMS VERY UNLIKELY, THOUGH THREAT HAVING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOW BEEN VOICED, UNIONS COULD FIND THEMSELVES BACKED INTO

STRIKE THEY WOULD PREFER TO AVOID. END SUMMARY.

2. ALL THREE UNIONS REPRESENTING STATION'S EMPLOYEES IN MUNICH AREA (NEWSPAPER GUILD OF NEW YORK, BAYERISCHE JOURNALISTENVERBAND AND DAG) PARTICIPATED IN VOTE, AND MEMBERS OF ALL THREE OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORTED CALL FOR UNION ACTION. VOTE WAS 403 IN FAVOR OF UNION RESOLUTION, 25 AGAINST, WITH FOUR ABSTENTIONS. THE 357 GERMAN EMPLOYEES IN MUNICH AREA, WHO ARE ALSO IN DAG, DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN VOTE.

3. BALLOT WAS DRAWN UP BY NEWSPAPER GUILD. FORUT POINTS IT CALLS FOR ARE:

A. PRESERVATION OF ESSENTIAL CHARACTER OF RFE AS THE "FREE PRESS" OF EASTERN EUROPE.

B. WITHDRAWAL OF THE THREATENED STAFF CUTS ADDITIONAL TO "CONSOLIDATION REDUCTIONS".

C. REFORM OF THE PENSION PLANS.

D. RESTORATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF PARTNERSHIP, INCLUDING ABANDONMENT OF THE "TENDENZ" CLAUSE IN THE GERMAN WORKS CONSTITUTION ACT, IN RELATIONS BETWEEN MANAGEMENT AND THE NATIONALITIES WORKS COUNCIL. (TENDENZ CLAUSE ALLOWS SOMEWHAT GREATER FREEDOM IN PERSONNEL MATTERS TO MANAGEMENT OF OPINION-FORMING INSTITUTIONS ON THEORY THAT MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE ABLE TO HIRE PERSONNEL WHO WILL FOLLOW ITS EDITORIAL LINE).

4. RFE DIRECTOR IS PRESENTLY IN PORTUGAL (WHERE STATION HAS ITS MAIN TRANSMITTERS) AND UNIONS AGREED TO AWAIT HIS RETURN. MEETING IS THEREFORE SET FOR JUNE 12. DIRECTOR TOLD US HE ANTICIPATED MORE OR LESS SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF ALL POINTS BUT THAT ON PERSONNEL CUTS, ON WHICH, HE SAID, HE HAS BEEN GIVEN NO FREEDOM TO NEGOTIATE BY NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS. CHARACTER OF STATION IS NON-ISSUE, THOUGH SOME EMPLOYEES PURPORT TO SEE POLITICAL MOTIVES BEHIND PERSONNEL CUTS (AS HAS GERMAN PRESS--SEE REFAIR). MANAGEMENT RECOGNIZES INADEQUACIES OF PENSION PLAN, AND FY 76 BUDGET CONTAINS PROVISIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT, IF THESE ARE LEFT IN. MANAGEMENT HAD NOT INVOKED TENDENZ CLAUSE UNTIL YEAR OR SO AGO, WHEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN ONE LABOR SUIT THE JUDGE HIMSELF INVOKED IT IN BEHALF OF RFE, AND STATION FELT IT COULD HARDLY REJECT JUDGE'S DECISION.

5. UNION HANDOUT STRESSES THAT VOTE AND ANY ACTIONS RESULTING FROM IT ARE IN NO WAY DIRECTED AGAINST RFE OR FUNCTIONS IT FULFILLS. RATHER, ACCORDING TO HANDOUT, UNIONS WANT TO SEE STATION MAINTAINED AT LEVEL AT WHICH

IT CAN CONTINUE ITS EFFECTIVE RO)E. HANDOUT NOTES THAT
PARALLEL UNION ACTION IS BEING UNDERTAKEN IN US. AIM
IS OBVIOUSLY TO PRESSUE BIB INTO INCREASING ITS FY 77
BUDGET REQUEST. UNIONS VERY CAREFULLY THREATENED STRIKE
AS ONLY ONE POSSIBLE ACTION THEY MIGHT TAKE, AND THEY
APPEAR TO RECOGNIZE FULLY THAT ACTUAL STRIKE WOULD UNDER-
CUT THEIR POSTURE OF SEEKING TO MAINTAIN EFFECTIVENESS OF
STATION. UNIONS ARE PROBABLY RELYING ON EFFECTIVENESS OF
CAMPAING WITH CONGREXSSMEN AND PUBLIC IN US TO PRESSURE
BIB TO REDUCE CUTS. ONLY IF THERE IS NO GIVE AT ALL ON
NUMBER OF CUTS DOES IT SEEM NOW THAT UNIONS MIGHT FEEL
BACKED INTO CORNER AND CALL STRIKE THEY DO NOT WANT.

6. ALL IS RELATIVELY QUIET AT RADIO LIBERTY, WITH NO
INDICATIONS OF ANY SIMILAR ACTION THERE.VALDES

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